

TILLAMOOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE
201 Laurel Avenue
Tillamook
Tillamook County
Oregon

HABS No. OR-158

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TILLAMOOK COUNTY COURTHOUSE

HABS No. OR-158

Location: 201 Laurel Avenue, bounded by First and Third Streets, Laurel and Madrona Avenues, in Tillamook, Tillamook County, Oregon 97141

Significance: The Tillamook County Courthouse is among the state's noteworthy examples of public architecture in the Modernistic or "Stripped Classical" style. By its scale and design it is the most monumental of public buildings in Tillamook (21).

This 1932 structure by Ellis F. Lawrence is an example of what has also been labeled the Half Modern style. It was designed by Lawrence as part of his quest for modern functional forms, while resisting the break with tradition espoused by the rising voices of the International style (22).

Description: The building is a fireproof structure of reinforced concrete, with stone and brick fascia, containing two stories and a daylight basement. Rectangular in shape, with wings at the north and south ends of the building, it is 211 feet long, 94 feet wide and 40 feet high. On the first floor, two main entrances face west at the north and south ends of the building. The original double wooden doors at the main entrances each averaged 8 1/2 x 3 1/2 feet, but in recent years these have been replaced by aluminum and glass entry doors and vestibule. Windows averaged 5 x 9 feet, except in the vaults, where windows sizes varied or were nonexistent. Tillamook County is presently in the third year of a three year project of replacing these rotted window casings with vinyl windows of the same style, color and shape. The walls and ceilings are plastered, but the floor and walls (to a height of six feet) in the lobbies and hallway on the first floor consist of fossiliferous limestone. Matching limestone is also found on the main staircases. Although elsewhere the cement floors were originally covered with linoleum or terrazzo, the linoleum was replaced at some unknown date by floor tiles. With the exception of the south lobby and north staircase, the original lighting has been replaced with fluorescent fixtures. The existing flat roof is now graced with a radio antenna tower and a cyclone fenced cage used as a prisoner exercise area (1).

Essentially, the present project is composed of two elements. The placement of an access ramp on the rear (east) elevation, constructed below grade, will have no adverse effect on the qualities which make the Courthouse Register-eligible. An elevator hoistway and balustrated second-story walkway will be constructed within the two story south lobby space, as well as extend through the lobby floor into the basement area. Although this alternative alters only two storage areas in the basement, the symmetry of the best-preserved lobby space in the building will be affected,

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and there will be alteration of historic finishes, even though it is proposed to re-use the marble wainscot to face the lower hoistway.

A portion of the decorative paneling for virtually the entire length of north elevation of the two-story public space will be effaced by the opening of a doorway and attachment of a second story walkway with handrail leading to the upper level elevator opening. That doorway and walkway will stop five feet short of meeting the mural on the east wall of the lobby. To mitigate the adverse effect on the lobby space the County has agreed to modify the surface articulation of the walkway so that the new construction will be distinguishable from that which is historic. The surface articulation will be simplified by eliminating vertical elements in the walkway fascia and eliminating string courses on hoistway walls. The use of matching cornice and original wainscot will provide visual continuity between the new corner feature and the rest of the interior space.

This alternative for siting requires comparatively little demolition, does not interfere with the facade organization by blocking window openings, does not interfere with the existing ceiling light fixture plan, and, owing to a reinterpretation of elevator retrofit requirements, neither would construction extend through the roof deck.

History: During the years 1928-30, a fund of \$105,000 was created by a tax levy for the purpose of altering and repairing the courthouse, which was built in 1905 and is located across the street from the present courthouse. (Today the old courthouse is used as the Tillamook County Pioneer Museum.) On October 10, 1931, the County Court decided that alteration of the existing courthouse would not meet the needs of a growing county. Because the Thayer homesite was available at a price of \$17,500.00, the County Court gave notice, "...that a public hearing would be had upon the matter on November 25, 1931..." It was also ordered that an additional \$55,000.00 be raised by means of a tax levy, to be imposed on December 22, 1931 (2), all of which funds were to be used for courthouse purposes.

At the November 25, 1931 public meeting, a motion unanimously carried to acquire the Thayer site and build a new courthouse for an approximate cost of \$160,000.00. The motion included the provision that construction be started on or about March 1, 1932 (3). The architectural plans of Lawrence, Holford, Allyn & Bean of Portland were accepted on January 30, 1932 under a contract which specified a fee based on 6% of construction costs (4).

It wasn't until March 1, 1932 that architect O.R. Bean reviewed the plans with the County Court (5). The project was advertised for bid on May 11, 1932 requesting separate quotes for the gener-

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al contractor, electrical, heating, plumbing and prison equipment (6). It is interesting to note that the general contract specifications called for three alternative bids based on the use of Wilkeson sandstone, Tenino sandstone or Indiana Oolite limestone (7).

As an indication of the high unemployment existing at that time, prequalifications were submitted and approved by the County Court for fourteen prime contractors (8). In fact, at the June 9, 1932 bid opening, the County Court had to relocate the session to the circuit courtroom to accommodate the forty two contractors who had submitted bids on the project (9).

On June 15, 1932 the prime contract was awarded to L.H. Hoffman of Portland in the amount of \$102,503.00, specifying the use of Indiana limestone (10). Contracts were also signed with Southern Prison Co. of San Antonio, Texas for supplying the prison equipment in the amount of \$3,728.00 (11), Grasle Electric in the amount of \$2,948.00 (12), plumber George Burkard (sic) for \$5,080.00 (13), and C.P. Yundt of Corvallis for the \$10,827 heating system (14).

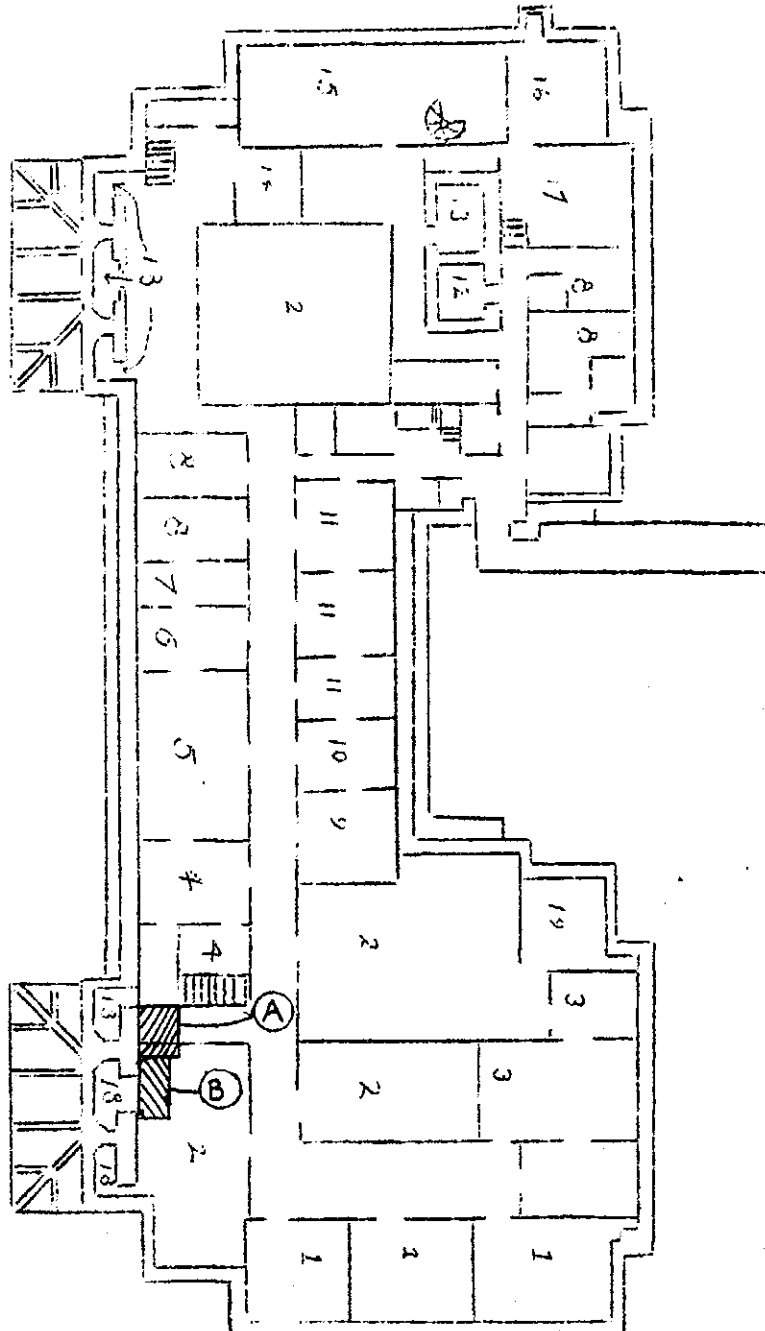
Ground for the new courthouse was broken on June 30, 1932 (15). Throughout the course of construction it became necessary to execute additional contracts that included one on December 5, 1932 with English Baker Company for light fixtures and outlets in the amount of \$2,440.65 (16), and on December 7, 1932 with Charles I. Clough for \$2,131.91 to build cabinets and a counter for the Clerk and Assessor's office, as well as to supply fourteen oak jury chairs at a cost of \$11.03 each (17).

Construction was completed and the building was accepted by the County Court on February 10, 1933 (18). Although the architectural drawings show a large amount of unfinished area, particularly in the basement (19), the floor plan in use by April 1940, as shown on the following pages, reflects the growth of County government to that date (20). Since that time, major alterations have occurred in virtually every interior area of the courthouse with the exception of the circuit courtroom, and south lobby.

The exterior facade has undergone some minor changes as set forth in the Description above. The courthouse presently houses the Department of Community Development (Planning, Building and Sanitation), Juvenile Services, the County Surveyor, the Office of Emergency Management, the law library, Data Processing, Cartography and Building Maintenance in the basement; the Circuit and District Courts, Personnel, Assessor's Office, the County Clerk, Tax Department, Purchasing and the County Treasurer on the first floor; and the District Attorney's Office, Justice Court, the County Commissioners Office, the Sheriff's Department and the County Jail on the second floor.

Tillamook County Court House
Floor Plan Sketch

Basement

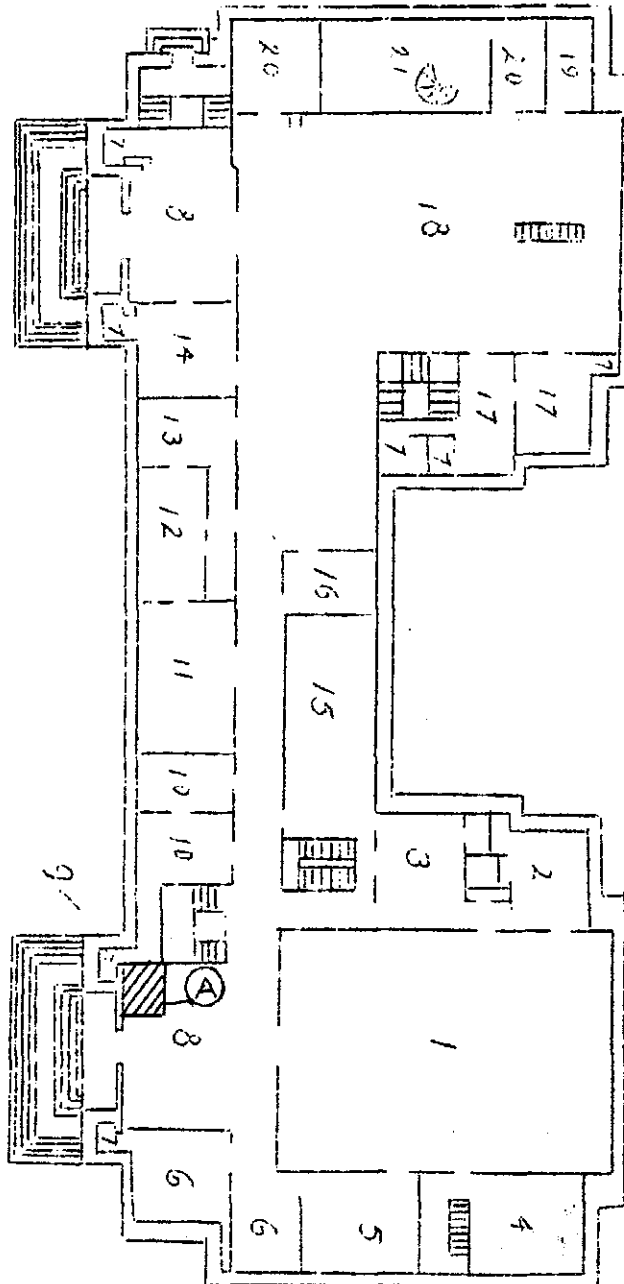


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|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Welfare Commission | 7. W. P. A. Surveyor | 14. School Supt's Vault |
| 2. Storage Rooms | 8. Rest Rooms | 15. Clerk's Vault |
| 3. U.S. Employment Svc. | 9. Grand Jury Room | 16. Fuel Room |
| 4. County Engineer | 10. Witness Room | 17. Boiler Room |
| 5. Drafting Room | 11. District Attorney | 18. Closets |
| 6. W. P. A. Timekeeper | 12. Sheriff's Vault | 19. Fan Room |
| | 13. Assessor's Vault | |

(A) Elevator

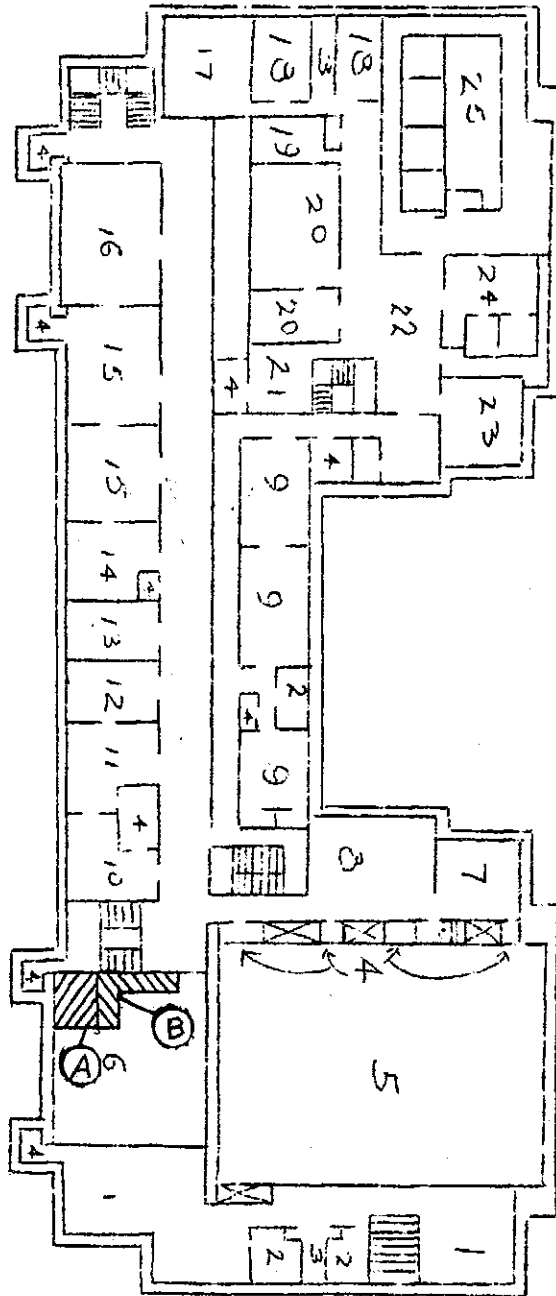
(B) Machine Room

First Floor



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|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Circuit Court | 8. Lobby | 15. Library |
| 2. Judge's Chamber | 9. Treas. Vault | 16. Assessor's Off. |
| 3. Attorney's Room | 10. Treas. Off. | 17. Sheriff's Off. |
| 4. Deliberating Room | 11. County Court Room | 18. Clerk's Work Room |
| 5. Witness Room | 12. County Judge's Off. | 19. Clerk's Off. |
| 6. Rest Rooms | 13. Court Reporter's Off. | 20. Abstractor's Off. |
| 7. Closets | 14. County Nurse's Off. | 21. Record Room |
| (A) Elevator | | |

Second Floor



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|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Dormitory | 9. Living Quarters | 18. Juvenile Cell |
| 2. Rest Rooms | 10. Agriculture Office | 19. Isolation Cell |
| 3. Showers | 11. Waiting Room | 20. Kitchen |
| 4. Closets | 12. Veterinarian | 21. Receiving Room |
| 5. Upper Circuit Court | 13. Office | 22. Lobby |
| 6. Upper part of Lobby | 14. Club Leader | 23. Men's Cell |
| 7. J. P. Office | 15. School Supt. | 24. Temporary Cell Blk. |
| 8. J. P. Courtroom | 16. Committee Room | 25. Future Cell Block |
| (A) Elevator | 17. Women's Cell | |
| (B) Walkway | | |

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SOURCES

- (1) Personal observation and the 20 drawing set of architectural plans prepared by Lawrence, Holford, Allyn & Bean, 1932, on file in the Tillamook County Surveyor's Office.
- (2) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 76, October 10, 1931.
- (3) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 91; Tillamook Headlight, November 26, 1931.
- (4) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 123, January 30, 1932.
- (5) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 130, March 1, 1932.
- (6) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 153, May 11, 1932.
- (7) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 157, June 9, 1932.
- (8) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 155, May 31, 1932.
- (9) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 157, June 9, 1932.
- (10) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 164, June 15, 1932.
- (11) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 182, August 4, 1932.
- (12) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 166, June 15, 1932.
- (13) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 169, June 15, 1932.
- (14) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 168, June 15, 1932.
- (15) Tillamook Herald, June 30, 1932.
- (16) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 231, December 5, 1932.
- (17) County Court Journals, Book "N", p. 234, December 7, 1932.
- (18) Tillamook Headlight, February 10, 1933.
- (19) Architectural Drawings by Lawrence, Holford, Allyn & Bean, 1932, on file at the Tillamook County Surveyor's Office.
- (20) "Inventory of the County Archives of Oregon, Tillamook County, Number 29", the Oregon Historical Records Survey Project, Works Progress Administration, April 1940, pp. 88-90.
- (21) Letter, State of Oregon Historic Preservation Office to Paul Levesque, Tillamook County Executive Assistant, December 2, 1991.

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(22) "Ellis F. Lawrence: Nonresidential Designs", by Michael Shellenbarger, from Harmony in Diversity: The Architecture and Teaching of Ellis F. Lawrence, Essays Edited by Michael Shellenbarger, University of Oregon, 1989.

HISTORIAN: Paul Levesque, Tillamook County Executive Assistant,
February 4, 1992.